



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 April 2025

by C Housden BSc(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/W/24/3352895

Garden Cottage, Flat 1, Vinehall Road, Johns Cross, Mountfield, East Sussex TN32 5JU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Lear of Domaines Investments Ltd against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application ref is RR/2024/859/P.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension, new covered porch and internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue relevant to this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and area, having regard to the location of the site within the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) and to the significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a single storey residential property with a rear garden, and forms part of a part two storey and part single storey building which has been subdivided and converted into a residential use. The building fronts onto a central courtyard, along with two other buildings located adjacent to and opposite the appeal site. The appeal property and wider building is considered to be a NDHA by the parties.
4. The significance of the NDHA is derived from its legibility as a former historic agricultural building set within the HWNL. The agricultural design and form of the building, along with features such as the brickwork contribute to its significance, as does its position set around a central courtyard with other former agricultural buildings. Whilst modern influences such as UPVC windows and fencing are present at the appeal site, and more modern development is perceptible at the nearby school, I still found on my visit a high level of legibility to the historical significance of the building through both its appearance and location.
5. The appeal site also positively contributes to the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL due to largely retaining its appearance and form as a former agricultural building that utilises traditional materials.
6. The appellant has sought to extend the property to increase the existing floor space and improve the outlook and provision of light to the property to benefit the living

conditions of future occupants. It would also remove the structure to the rear of the property which currently detracts from the appearance of the building.

7. However, the proposed rear extension would be excessive in length and with its bulky gable design would add inappropriate massing to the host building which would appear intrusive and would not be a subordinate addition to the building. The host property and wider building is designed with a horizontal emphasis, however the proposed extension would be juxtaposed against it which would be contrary to the character and appearance of the building and would detrimentally alter its form.
8. The design of the rear extension is of a distinctly domestic appearance, which would also be at odds with the largely retained agricultural character and appearance of the host building. The domestic appearance is emphasised by the white render finish which would harmfully contrast with the traditional brickwork of the host building. The amount of glazing proposed would also further the domestic appearance of the rear extension which would appear at odds with the host building which utilises a moderate amount of glazing due to its agricultural form.
9. Whilst the extension is located to the rear of the site where views of the extension would be more limited than the front of the property, this does not justify the poor design given the building's significance as a NDHA is partly derived from the architectural merits and form of the building, which allows an appreciation of the properties agricultural past, rather than solely the specific association with the courtyard to the front of the property. I therefore find that the proposed rear extension would result in harm to the significance of the host building as a NDHA for the reasons that I have described.
10. Furthermore, the rear of the site is situated in an elevated position whereby longer-range views, even if they would be glimpsed through vegetation from some angles, would be possible from within the wider HWNL. The harm which I have identified would also therefore be perceptible in the wider landscape. The rear extension would therefore not conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL through its scale, massing, poor design, rendered finish and inappropriate domestication of a former agricultural building which presently contributes positively to the landscape.
11. In relation to the front porch, whilst the proposal would introduce a domestic feature to the front elevation of the property, I am satisfied that due to the limited scale of the porch this would not be harmful to the significance of the NDHA, or to the wider landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL.
12. The appellant has referred to a ministerial statement regarding the desire for making it easier for families to undertake home improvements, which also helps to generate economic activity. Whilst this is a material consideration, it does not diminish the harm which I have found in relation to the main matter.
13. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and wider area, including the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL and to the significance of the building as a NDHA. The appeal proposal would therefore conflict with Policies OSS4, RA2, RA3, RA4, EN1, EN2 and EN3 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Policies DEN1 and DEN2 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (2019). These policies seek to ensure that development contributes positively to the character of the site and surroundings whilst also conserving rural character and built heritage. They

further seek to ensure the retention of the legibility of historic farm buildings and to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL.

14. The appellant has questioned the relevance of Policies RA4 and OSS3 to the appeal. I agree that Policy OSS3 is not relevant as it relates to the locational suitability of development. In this case, it is the detailed design of the extension where I have found harm. However, I find that Policy RA4 is relevant to the appeal proposal as this policy relates to alterations of historic farm buildings.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has suggested that an alternative extension could be carried out under permitted development. However, I do not have plans before me demonstrating what this extension would look like, or a certificate of lawful development confirming the lawfulness of an alternative permitted development extension. I therefore have insufficient evidence to conclude that there is a greater than theoretical possibility that the fallback development might take place.
16. The appellant has also referred to an extension on the opposite side of the building being of a similar depth to the appeal proposal. I note that this extension has a more traditional and subservient appearance and form than the extension before me. As such, this extension is not directly comparable to the appeal proposal which includes a greater depth with a different architectural design which I have found to be harmful.
17. Furthermore, in relation to this extension, the appellant has provided plans for its conversion to residential, which includes French doors approved by the Council. However, given the very different appearance of this extension compared to the appeal proposal, this does not provide justification for the glazing on the appeal proposal given the differing designs of the extensions.
18. The appellant has suggested that the Council has longstanding housing supply and delivery problems. However, the appeal proposal extends an existing property rather than numerically increasing the housing stock of the area. As such, the appeal would not have any housing land supply implications.

Conclusion

19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Housden

INSPECTOR